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Spring Forward This Sunday: “Change Your Clocks, Change Your Batteries”

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) recommends changing smoke alarm batteries when setting clocks ahead one hour this Sunday, March 12, 2017. Smoke alarm batteries should be changed twice a year in order to ensure that they work properly to prevent injuries and deaths in case of a fire.

“We recommend that fire alarm batteries are replaced twice a year in order to make sure it is working in case of a fire,” said State Fire Marshal Matt Perez. “Daylight Savings Time is a great reminder to do that as you change your clocks. We may be losing an hour this weekend, but by taking a few extra minutes to change out your fire alarm batteries, you could save a life.”

More than 18,000 structure fires are reported on average each year in Illinois. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), in 2014 there were close to 1.3 million fires in the United States, causing 3,275 deaths and over \$11 billion in property damage. A 2015 report by the NFPA notes that three out of five home fire deaths result from fires in properties where no working smoke alarms were present.

Illinois law requires every household to have smoke alarms within 15 feet of every bedroom, and at least one on each floor of the home.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal provides the following recommendations for installing and maintaining smoke alarms:

Installation

- NFPA strongly recommends either installing combination smoke alarms, or both ionization and photoelectric alarms, in the home. An ionization alarm is typically more responsive to a flaming fire, such as a pan fire. A photoelectric alarm is typically more responsive to a smoldering fire, as might occur when a lit cigarette is dropped on a sofa. Combination smoke alarms have both ionization and photoelectric capabilities.
- Make sure the smoke alarm you choose carries the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Consider installing interconnected smoke alarms. Interconnected smoke alarms offer enhanced protection; when one sounds, they all do.

- A licensed electrician can install either hard-wired multiple-station alarms or wireless alarms and can also replace existing hard-wired smoke alarms with wirelessly interconnected alarms.

Maintenance and Testing

- Test smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button, and make sure everyone in your home knows the sound.
- If an alarm “chirps,” warning the battery is low, replace the battery right away.
- Replace all smoke alarms, including alarms that use 10-year batteries and hard-wired alarms, when they’re 10 years old or sooner if they do not respond properly when tested.
- Change the batteries on smoke alarms at least twice a year. Daylight Savings Time can serve as a reminder to “Change your Clock, Change your Batteries.”

For more information on fire safety and prevention, please visit OSFM’s website at sfm.illinois.gov.